

SPIRITISM

Fraud . . . or Fact?

Can men actually communicate with departed spirits? What about the witch of Endor? What does the Bible say of Spiritism?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

IS THERE anything to *Spiritism*? Granted there is trickery and deception. Houdini, one of the greatest trick artists of modern times, exposed numerous frauds. So also have Thurston, Walsh, Gearson and many another. Some leading Spiritists have been convicted of "plain dishonesty" or "common fraud" and imprisoned.

Yet not all Spiritism is fraud or sleight of hand!

When all the fraudulent phenomena, the tricks, the deceptions are carefully and scientifically sifted out, there remains something to be accounted for — some *real* SUPERNATURAL EVENTS that cannot be explained away!

Wicked Spirits in Control

Whether or not human beings like to admit it, the Bible plainly teaches that *supernatural powers control and operate this world*. The Apostle Paul was inspired to write that human beings must struggle "against *powers*, against the *rulers* of the darkness of this world, against *wicked spirits* in high places" (Ephesians 6:12, margin).

Jesus Christ never contested Satan's claim that all the nations of the world were his. Said Satan: "All this *power*" — the control of the nations — "will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke 4:6-7).

Little wonder, then, that Spiritism should be manifest in a world con-

trolled and operated by wicked spirits in high places!

Modern Spiritism had its birth at Hydesville, New York, in 1848. It began with the famous Rochester knockings heard by the Fox sisters. Within less than a century Spiritism obtained millions of followers. It is a RELIGION masquerading under the name of Christianity.

Spiritism is based on the devil's first recorded lie! The devil has continued to deceive millions into believing that the dead can *talk* with the living!

The Dead Cannot Talk With the Living!

Notice what Jesus said about the dead, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are *in the graves* SHALL HEAR his voice, and shall come forth . . . unto the resurrection" (John 5:28-29).

The dead *cannot* communicate with the living!

But the DEVIL must perpetuate his lie! He must make it *appear* that the dead can communicate with the living. That is why the manifestations of Spiritism exist — to perpetuate a lie!

Spiritism is a work of DARKNESS! Paul warns us: "Have NO FELLOWSHIP with the unfruitful works of DARKNESS, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Millions of dollars have been filched from unthinking people who have lost loved ones and who have sought to contact them in the DARKNESS of Spiritist seances. GOD's blessings come "without money and without price." But it *costs money* to fellowship Spiritism's DARKNESS!

Extorting money from innocent victims on behalf of the *dead* is a RACKET ALMOST SIX THOUSAND YEARS OLD! The racket is controlled by Satan the devil. Spiritism, however, is not its only form. This racket even manifests itself in powerful denominations. Sorrowing relatives are asked to *pay* to relieve their loved ones from suffering supposedly occurring on the other side of death!

Two Kinds of Angels

Since not all Spiritism is trickery — and since the dead CANNOT communicate with the living, then what power *causes* the phenomena of Spiritism?

Remember that this world is controlled by SUPERNATURAL SPIRIT POWERS. Satan is called the *prince of this world* in three distinct scriptures — John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11. He is the *god of this age* whom the world worships in ignorance! Paul said, ". . . the *god of this world* [or "age"] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4).

The Bible reveals that there are only *two* classes of spirit beings created by God. Man is NOT spirit. He is mortal flesh. Paul wrote of man: "For this corruptible must *put on* incorruption, and this *mortal* must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53).

Here are the two classes of spirits:

1) *Obedient angels* of God. Paul wrote: "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand,

until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering *spirits*, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:13-14). Obedient angels are *spirits* sent to minister to mortal, fleshly human beings who are heirs to salvation — *heirs* to immortality!

2) Demons or fallen angels, subject to the princely authority of Satan the devil. Satan is the "prince of demons" (Mark 3:22). We read of Satan and his angels in Revelation 12:9, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and *his angels* were cast out with him." The Apostle Peter wrote of them: "For if God spared not the *angels* that *sinned*, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (II Peter 2:4).

The two classes of created spirit beings are both angels. The only difference is that one class is obedient, the other class **DISOBEDIENT**.

The spirits manifesting themselves through Spiritism are of the second class — **WICKED** spirits.

Cause of Demon-Possession

The demons manifest their powers in various ways — sometimes in the *darkness* of Spiritist seances, sometimes through possessing the mental and physical attributes of human beings. This latter form is often termed "demon possession." There are several interesting cases recorded in the Bible. Turn to Acts 16:16-18 and notice one example:

"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the *spirit*, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

Notice that evil spirits can possess the mental and vocal faculties of human beings. They *impersonate* or *pretend*

that they are human beings. They often manifest their powers in connection with religion to deceive innocent victims — or to bring reproach upon the name of God by their misconduct, as in the example in Acts 16.

In other instances they utilize human faculties in a violent manner. Institutions for the insane are filled with helpless human beings possessed with spirits of violence. Notice the example found in Matthew 8:28-33:

"And when he [Jesus] was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with *demons*" — the King James Version incorrectly uses the word "devils" — "coming out of the tombs, *exceeding fierce*, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the demons besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold — the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."

Here is an example of the power of evil spirits — the very evil spirits *impersonating* lost loved ones in Spiritist seances!

Spiritism Condemned in Bible

God condemned Spiritism centuries ago. Here are His words: "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:31).

A familiar spirit is a particular spirit who associates itself with a Spiritist medium who is usually a woman. A familiar spirit is often called a "guide" because it guides or controls the seance for the medium. A *wizard* is a male human being who acts as an instrument of wicked spirits. In this verse in Leviticus, God warns His people not to *attribute divine power* to women or men who act as slaves of evil spirits nor to regard

what they say. We are to regard what God says and to attribute power to HIM! He is the Eternal your God!

Again, notice, God's condemnation of Spiritism in Deut. 18:9-12:

"When thou art come into the land which the Eternal thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth *divination*, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a *witch*, or a charmer, or a *consulter with familiar spirits*, or a *wizard*, or a *necromancer*. For all that do these things are an **ABOMINATION** unto the Eternal: and because of these **ABOMINATIONS** the Eternal thy God doth drive them [the Gentiles] out from before thee."

Spiritism is an **ABOMINATION** to God. He drove out the Gentiles in the days of Joshua for permitting Spiritism. And the same punishment is coming upon our nations for permitting Spiritism and its kindred arts to flourish!

Notice that God condemns the witch — a woman who pretends to contact the "spirit" of a beloved one who has recently died — and a consulter of familiar spirits — usually a woman who contacts a particular spirit for information — and a wizard and a *necromancer* — one who professes to predict the future by the art of communicating with the dead.

These are all forms of Spiritism: All these forms are *condemned* by God Almighty. Spiritism is *evil*. It is a direct instrumentality of the **DEVIL**. Because it is so evil, God condemns those who practice Spiritism and those who seek to contact the dead in its seances! God means business. It is a question of following Spiritism and rejecting eternal life or of rejecting Spiritism and obeying God in order to receive eternal life. Spiritism perpetuates the devil's lie that the dead are not really dead. God says we must come to HIM to **OBTAIN** eternal life: "For the wages of sin is **DEATH**; but the *gift* of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Spiritism is condemned as one of the products of *human carnality* — as a

fruit of the flesh. Paul wrote: "Now the works of the flesh are *manifest*, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, WITCHCRAFT, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: OF THE WHICH I TELL YOU BEFORE, AS I HAVE ALSO TOLD YOU IN TIME PAST, that they which do such things shall not inherit the KINGDOM OF GOD" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Saul's Experience With a Witch

One of the most noted portions of Scripture — yet one of the *least* understood — is the case of Saul and the witch at Endor. This story is found in I Samuel 28. Notice verse 3 of this chapter: "Now *Samuel was dead*, and all Israel had lamented him, and BURIED HIM IN RAMAH, even in his own city."

Notice that Samuel was dead and buried. He was *not* alive.

Continuing, "And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. And the Philistines gathered themselves together . . . and when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul inquired of the Eternal, the Eternal ANSWERED HIM NOT, neither by dreams, nor by Urim [through the high priest], nor by prophets" (verse 6).

God would *not* listen to Saul. Saul had been disobedient. Samuel had been inspired to tell Saul: "For rebellion is as the *sin of witchcraft*" (I Sam. 15:23).

What did Saul do? "Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a *woman* that hath a *familiar spirit*, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor" (verse 7).

Remember that Samuel was buried in *Ramah*, located in the territory belonging to the tribe of Ephraim (I Sam. 1:1, 19). But the Philistines and Saul were now near Lake Galilee, on Mount Gilboa, near Endor — about 50 miles from the place in which Samuel was buried. The night before the battle "Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two

men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee" (verse 8).

Saul sinned by seeking a witch. If God would not answer Saul by a prophet because of Saul's disobedience in government administration, how much more would God *refuse to answer Saul by a prophet* when Saul seeks to a witch! Remember that Samuel was a *prophet* (Acts 13:20) and a *judge* (I Sam. 7:6, 15-17). And God would *not* use a prophet to answer Saul! In other words, God would *not* use Samuel the prophet to answer Saul; neither would God use any other means, for that matter. God absolutely refused to listen to Saul because of his rebellious attitude.

The Spirit Masquerades as Samuel

But notice what happened: "Then said the woman, Whom shall I *bring up* unto thee?" Notice that the woman spirit medium claimed to contact the dead by supernaturally bringing them up from the grave through the familiar spirit. This form was practised when the people believed that the dead were in their graves. *Today* spirit mediums have the familiar spirit produce a voice from the air — because it is commonly believed *today* that the dead are *not* in their graves but somewhere else!

Saul replied to the woman: "Bring me up Samuel."

Instead of the familiar spirit appearing *first*, and then the visionary form of a dead person, the woman saw *first* a form that looked exactly like Samuel! "And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou?" (I Sam. 28:12-13.)

Notice that the familiar spirit did not manifest itself first at Saul's seance. Instead, the familiar spirit produced the form of Samuel which *ONLY THE WOMAN SAW!* Saul did not see it! He asked the woman what *she saw!*

"And the woman said unto Saul, I saw *gods* ascending out of the earth" (verse 13, last part). This is an *in-*

correct translation. The word translated "gods" is *elohim* in the Hebrew. It can mean either the true God, pagan gods or *judges*. In Exodus 22:8, 9, the Hebrew word *elohim* is translated *judges*. In I Samuel 28:13, the verse should have been translated: "I saw a *judge* ascending out of the earth." This is *proved* by what follows:

"And he said unto her, What form is *he* of? And she said, An old *man* cometh up; and *he* is covered with a mantle. And Saul *perceived* that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself" (verse 14).

A Deception

Notice that Saul still did *NOT* see anyone! He *only perceived* by reasoning that the form which the woman saw was that of Samuel! Here we have a perfect illustration of the impersonation of human beings by evil spirits. The familiar spirit produced an illusion which only the woman saw. To her the illusion was that of a judge rising out of the earth. Remember that Samuel was actually buried about 50 miles away, not at Endor where the seance was occurring! Samuel was *not* resurrected. The whole thing was a SUPERNATURAL FRAUD!

While *impersonating Samuel*, the spirit spoke to king Saul thus: "And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" — notice the *lying* spirit. Satan lied to Eve, in a similar manner! "And Saul answered, I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and GOD IS DEPARTED FROM ME, AND ANSWERETH ME NO MORE, NEITHER BY PROPHETS, NOR BY DREAMS: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do" (verse 15).

The spirit continues to impersonate Samuel by reprimanding Saul for all his evil deeds. Finally the spirit concluded by saying: "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: and the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hands of the Philistines" (verse 19).

How did the spirit know what was to happen? Because God often makes His plans known to evil spirits! Notice I Kings 22:22-23 and II Chronicles

18:21-22. God permitted "lying spirits" to know His plans. God rules over all. But He has allowed Satan and his demons to control and influence this entire world. The familiar spirit of the witch at Endor must have known that God would deliver Saul that next day. So it told Saul what would happen in order that its impersonation of Samuel might *seem* real!

Saul's Punishment

Now read what happened to Saul for inquiring about the future from a spirit medium: "So Saul *died* for his transgression which he committed against the Eternal, even against the word of the Eternal, which he kept not, and *also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired NOT of the Eternal: therefore He slew him*, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse" (I Chronicles 10:13-14).

That is exactly how serious God regards Spiritism! He took the life of Saul for seeking information at a seance!

In His Revelation to the Apostle John, Jesus warns us of the *growing* influence of wicked spirits. They will become so *influential* in world affairs that the rulers of nations will act upon their deceptive, lying words. The control of these wicked spirits, described in Revelation 16:13-16, will lead to ARMAGEDDON!

TODAY we are warned: "Believe *not* every spirit, but TRY THE SPIRITS *whether they are of God*" (I John 4:1). We need to *prove* whether spirits are good or evil.

Notice what Isaiah wrote: "And *when* they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter:

should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? *To the law and to the testimony*: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:19-20).

Evil Spirits Pretend to Bring Light

The spirits who masquerade as human beings at Spiritist seances *pretend* to bring LIGHT and knowledge. Here is what Paul wrote of them: "For such [ministers who pretend to serve Jesus Christ] are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; FOR SATAN HIMSELF IS TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:13-15).

James tells us what to do when the influence of wicked spirits is present: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. RESIST THE DEVIL, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). You must not obey the devil by yielding to his temptations. Instead, ask God for help. Refuse to yield to satanic influence. Submit to God's correction. Let Him guide you.

The most important chapter in all the Bible relating to our combat with evil spirits is found in Ephesians 6, beginning with verse 10. Here is what we read:

"Finally, my brethren, be *strong* in the Lord, and in the *power of His might*. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, *against wicked spirits in high*

places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand. . . . Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with TRUTH" — Jesus said the *truth* shall make us free (John 8:32). God's Word — the Bible — is *truth*. We need to *understand* it.

Continuing, "And having on the breastplate of righteousness" — righteousness is defined as keeping all God's commandments (Psalm 119:172). "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" — we must all work, that the good news of the Kingdom of God may reach the whole world.

"*Above all*, taking the shield of FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" — *absolute trust* in God for deliverance despite all obstacles — "and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD of God" — use the Bible to know what to do and to know what to resist. It is the only sword which can vanquish evil spirits, and which can overcome sin and produce self-mastery!

"*Praying* always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto *with all perseverance* and supplication for all the saints" — don't slack off in praying, don't become negligent. PRAY with perseverance, not only for yourself, but for all those whom God has called.

We are all in this battle together! It is a titanic struggle.

Our eternal life depends upon whether we overcome the temptations of the devil and submit to the rule, the AUTHORITY of God over our lives.

It is high time we recognized the evil powers which manifest themselves through Spiritism!